ADDRESSES

by

MR G. D. NAIDU
MR N. LAKSHMANAN

and

MR P. R. RAMAKRISHNAN

on the occasion of the party in honour of

MR J. A. BORRON,
Economic Information officer of the
British Information Services

and

MR BORRON'S REPLY

at

"GOPAL BAGH", Coimbatore

on

28—5—1948.

Coimbatore, 29-5-'48:

Mr G. D. Naidu arranged a delightful tea party yesterday at "Gopal Bagh" in honour of Mr J. A. Borron, Economic Information Officer of the British Information Services. There was a large gathering of journalists, students of the Arthur Hope Polytechnic and prominent citizens of Coimbatore. After tea, Mr Naidu garlanded Mr Borron and said:

Dear friends,

At the outset I have to thank Mr J. Borron for accepting my invitation even before we personally met each other. Of course I came to know of him through Mr Lakshmanan and Mr Sundarasami, who are prominent among the journalists.

When we held a meeting in this very same place on 5-5-1948, I thought that that would be the final meeting in my present position and in this place. But as usual with the government, on account of its delayed actions, still I am having some more opportunities for meetings here. This meeting is one of such kind.

Of course, I am intending to open an exhibition here from the middle of next month. There may be some more meetings at that time. But on account of a known reason, if no exhibition is conducted, this will be the last meeting.

Whenever I see the inside of myself or anything else, I make it a point to observe as the first thing, "what are the defects or bad things". Unless we find out and remove such bad things, we cannot see any prosperity. In this way, whenever we meet here, it has become a nature to voice forth the truth and to ask for the removal of defects in case there were any. Almost all friends, who happened to be here, took such criticisms in a sportsmanlike spirit. Of course, some others, who heard only half of my speech or who saw the headings alone in the papers criticised me and condemned me mildly and in certain cases vehemently also. I do not mind that. But still my policy will be removal of bad things to retain the best thing in any place and in any matter under any circumstances.

Perhaps you may be under an impression that I want to level up here some criticisms. That is not so. This meeting is convened to introduce to you and honour an eminent Information Officer, Mr Borron of the British Information Services. I do not know much of these kinds of services. I have to learn these only hereafter. With a view to learn this profession, I had applied for permission to start a newspaper. It was recommended by the Government of Madras, but fortunately or unfortunately, it was refused by the Central Government without any reason, as nobody with influence or something went and saw anybody there in this connection. Later on, I purchased a paper "Pudu Ulagam", which was running on loss. Soon after I purchased this paper, the paper control was lifted. Though I declared myself as Editor of the paper,

I have not so far edited anything, but I am waiting for an opportunity to edit this paper in the very near future, after I am relieved from the present struggle.

There will not be any justification if I make any speeches, which are not concerned with this occasion in this place. At the same time I am sorry to say I do not know much about the information office or journalistic work. But I want to tell you as an ordinary man, who can see or hear information in our country and other countries as well, that the difference between journalism and giving of information in other countries and those in our country is too much and very great. In other countries, any information about the Government's activities will be known to the public the next day itself, throughout the country. In the same manner, the activities or opinion of the public will be in the hands of the Government within a very short time. Unfortunately in our country the government is not able to get any information about the mind of the public or their activities or opinions. Even the public also are not able to understand so easily and quickly, in spite of the radio and the press. Therefore, in short, the people are almost not able to get any information of anything that is going on beyond the boundaries of their houses. Even when questions are put in legislative bodies, only evasive replies are given, because the Government and the members and officers of the Government themselves have not got information, have not got elaborate statistics and have not got an elaborate system in maintaining statistics and the like. Of course there

are some statistical departments and information offices, which can give only very old information. They are not provided with up-to date information.

In other countries, the situation is quite different. If you want to get at any information, in a moment's time you can get it correctly from anyone, who is walking in the street or from any member of any association. Answers to any number of questions, such as 'what is the balance sheet of government expenses in this year, in this month or in this week,' 'what is the production and consumption of food grains or cotton or rubber,' 'what is the policy of the Prime Minister or the President with regard to South America, Australia or India,' 'what are the export figures of machinery, food grains, fountain pens, chocolates, card boards, papers etc upto yesterday,' 'what are the import figures upto last week,' 'how much diamonds or diamond tools will be arriving within the end of next quarter,' 'when will Russia begin the war,' 'what are the arrangements made here in case of invasion,' 'at what time today will the snow storm appear, as it is a cloudy day,' and to what safety efforts are to be taken at that time are known to each and everyone there. But here also we can get the figures after the storm ruined the crop or houses or lives, or after a country started the war and ended the war with infinite loss of lives. For instance the Nizam has already started the war. Still our Government is trying some negotiations with the Nizam.

Already there are in the horizon causes cropping up for famine and corruption. But still the government is trying with some peculiar controls

or with some peculiar methods with a peculiar policy, which none of the public is ever aware of. Fortunately the journalists are doing their role to mitigate corruption and famine in this country to some extent. There too the government interfere and dictate something which is detrimental for themselves as well as for the public. I am not saying that journalists and newspapers are cent percent perfect.

In the journalistic field, we come across newspaper men hiding some news, or exaggerating some for their own interest. At times they cause communal bitterness and political opposition only with self-interest. These defects are slowly disappearing now, but the defects in Government are appearing and growing more and more.

The press, radio, editors, journalists, and the like are used to give useful news and education for the general public. Unfortunately they are mostly used and the space in the newspapers is also used to fill up some fiction or one-sided, or exaggerated, or scanty news. Music and unbelievable stories permeate the air. Perhaps journalists or even friends who are here and the Government may get angry with me for exposing these defects particularly in the presence of our Guest and other friends. I am telling you only facts. Unless we speak out facts boldly, we cannot get good ideas and we cannot get good and sound advice from high officials like the Economic Information Officer of the British Information Services to rectify the defects and to improve the conditions.

Please be assured that I never wanted to wantonly criticise. Still I have to request you not to misunderstand me. I do not want to take much of your time.

I request our journalist-friends to tell us their experiences and needs so that Mr Borron can give his advice to not only journalists, but the public and the Government as well.

Yesterday, when I met Mr Borron at the lunch party arranged by the journalists, after the Polytechnic examination, I asked him to conduct an examination of the journalists also. He agreed. I do not know whether he has already conducted or is going to conduct the examination. I asked him to get answers for a few questions from the journalists.

"How many journalists are there in Madras or in South India?

How many of them are in Tamil, Telugu, Canarese, Malayalam and English? What is the status of the journalists now?

What is their status when they started their career?

When people incur some loss in a businees in which they are involved and when they find no more income in that business, they go in for some other business. But in journalism eventhough they cannot get any profit, they are sticking on to their business for a long time. Why?"

I asked him to get information for the above questions from journalists and to give them the necessary advice. I do not know whether he has got the information from them and whether he is going to give the results. I request Mr Lakshmanan to give this information if Mr Borron has not already got it so that he (Mr Borron) can give his advice.

I thank you all for your response to my invitation and for your patient hearing.

Mr N. LAKSHMANAN:

Mr Borron, Mr G. D. Naidu, Ladies and Gentlemen,

When I agreed to represent on this occasion I did not calculate that our noble host was going to give a thunderbolt against you and me. But now when the challenge has come I must accept that in all humility.

In the first place, so far as India is concerned, journalism till very recently was not a profession, but an avocation. Especially this remark is true with reference to weekly journals in this country. With your permission, I would like to refer to my noble chief, late Mr Natarajan, who demised a few days ago in the ripe old age of 79 years. He conducted a weekly journal for 50 years without a break and now that journal *Indian Social Reformer* is 57 years old. My noble friend Mr Natarajan was a thoroughly independent man. He was so independent that he was one of the best exponents of the views of Gandhiji.

In our country we have copied journalism from Britain. As I have already mentioned, it so happened that most of our journalists took it up more as an avocation, rather than as a profit-bearing business. For example, take the oldest and foremost daily journal the *Hindu*. While I was young, I had the good fortune to come across with Mr G. Subramania Iyer who was the founder of that paper. Then it was left to Mr Kasturiranga Iyengar. He was a Coimbatorean. He went up to Madras and after great struggle, he was able to make the *Hindu*, the popular daily in the East. You know that that great man's worthy son Mr K. Srinivasan was received by the Prime Minister of Great Britain some days ago. Indian journalism has always won respect especially in Great Britain. We did not adopt journalism from the American model. We got inspiration from the Britisher.

You know, perhaps, as early as 40 years ago, Mr Surendranath Bannerji attended a great gathering in London. At that time Lord Morley made a famous speech on journalism. It seems after sometime one young man went to this office and asked for the job of a journalist. He asked, "what is your qualification for it". Then the reply came, "abuses, bitter abuses and more abuses". Then Lord Morley seems to have said, "there is no vacancy, you better go". This happened forty years ago. Then in 1918, when I was in the office of the *Indian Social Reformer*, the great Kasturiranga Iyengar was invited to go and see the war-front in Europe at the time of the First World War. He created a tremendous impression in the minds of the British administrators and statesmen at that time.

Till very recently, journalism has not been in our country a paying proposition for the very simple reason that our country is a very poor one, in fact the poorest country in the world except perhaps China. So the status and emoluments of the journalist are part and parcel of the poverty problem in this country. Such being the case, I think one will not be rather rash in making a strong statement about any journalist. In spite of these circumstances, we have, especially in South India, produced several good journalists compared with most of the countries in the world. I remember one remark made by Mr Natarajan some weeks before his death. He stated in his message, "as a class the Indian journalists lack freshness". In other words, being under foreign domination for 150 or 200 years, one of our important duties was to get rid of the foreign yoke and finish the work of driving away the Britisher bag and baggage as a Britisher and not as our friend. This does not at all mean that we should be bitter against any Britisher, English man or English woman. The greatest point is, as Mr C. F. Andrews has said, that when we get political freedom we can shake hands with the Britisher as equals and to that extent, political emancipation has brought about perfect understanding between Great Britain and ourselves.

Some are apt to think of isolation. If you see the truth, the present day parliament is copied from the West. The language in which I am conveying my thoughts is English. I have the audacity to agree with Mr Natarajan that we cannot get rid of this wonderful language, a language of freedom

and of contact. This is an international language. If we want to get rid of this language, we are committing a blunder. Maulana Azad also said that for five years to come, we cannot have any other language. So you must think twice or even thrice, before you think of getting rid of the English language.

Do not think I am lacking in patriotism. I wish to say I am also in favour of Tamil. I wish to retain the English language while developing our regional language. This is my impression like those of other pioneers.

I need hardly say that some of them (journalists) lack equipment. In that, I concur with Mr G. D. Naidu's remarks that most of us require equipments. It is my duty to go through this; but I am not for blaming them. They were under foreign rule all this time. But that chapter is now over. Though we have the dawn of political freedom in this cotunry, yet we have to tackle the economic and social problems. To this end, the journalists will be rendering and can do a great service in the English language. I have devoted at least 30 years till last month, for this object, so that my voice could be heard in the far distant villages. Mr G. D. Naidu is convinced that there is no use of literary journalism in India, but the children and adults should be educated as far as possible in order that they may exercise their franchise in the coming years. We will have to use the radio and the cinema along with journalism. I will challenge anybody assembled here if they have seen a wonderful place like this

anywhere throughout this province. Here, we have got educational films that can be exhibited any time. Several people come here and see the narvellous cinemas. Mr Naidu has been so proficient in cinemas and radio to such an extent as to invoke the admiration of no less a person as Sir C. V. Raman, who has just returned back after his wonderful tour in the West. As such, I should be apologetic in one way. We should equip ourselves in order to tackle the manifold problems.

When I deal with this subject, I should mention that Ooty — the queen of hill stations — will become the centre of a great conference. I am glad that my friend, Mr Borron is attending as one of the delegates to that Conference. Just as we, poor journalists have come here at the invitation of Mr G. D. Naidu, Mr Borron out of sheer generosity had invited us to the conference.

This year and last year, we had in Coimbatore the conference of South Indian Journalists Federation. I have had the temerity to invite Mr Borron on these occasions and to see the achievements, as also to contact some of our greatest leaders. Now that Mr Borron has come from Madras I am very happy that we could have an infusion to our fresh blood in this noble profession of journalism.

I am glad that Mr G. D. Naidu wants to become a journalist (Cheers). Such men of knowledge who have got international contact and not mere "frogs in the well" should join the ranks of journalists.

I am now 56 years old and I was in journalism whatever despondency may come. I am quite confident that men of Mr G. D. Naidu's genius can surely give an impetus to this field. I am very happy indeed that Mr G. D. Naidu is not the only person, but Mr P. R. Ramakrishna Naidu has also joined the rank of Mr Naidu. He has started in Coimbatore a Tamil daily named *Nava India*. I have the temerity to say in this connection that the inauguration day of the paper is the birthday of his own child. I have got very high hopes about that journal. He has gained experience marvellously from England and America where he has been an ordinary labourer and now he has become lucky in his present position in manufacturing his own machinery for the press to such an extent that we need not bother about Sterling Balances, this thing or that thing. Being a veteran in that field, his journal should benefit people who work in fields and factories. I know he has had industrial and technical experience. He had contacts with cultural heroes like Dr Ananda Cumarasami. On behalf of the journalists of Coimbatore I lend support to his fine venture in our city, which is the Manchester of India.

With reference to the alleged charges levelled against us by Mr G. D. Naidu, I would urge the South Indian Journalists Federation to carry on a survey as stated by our genial host. I would also request you all to excuse me for having spoken at such a length. I have great pleasure in thanking you and Mr Borron for having allowed me to address such a representative gathering as this.

Mr P. R. RAMAKRISHNAN:

Mr Borron, Mr G. D. Naidu and friends,

I have not come here to make a speech. But I have come to honour Mr Borron and I want to know, what as Information Officer, he has been doing in India and what information they hope to give to make both countries come to a definite understanding and co-operation. Mr Lakshmanan said that I have started a daily newspaper.

Even as a boy, I had an ambition to become a journalist. But as I hail from an industrial family, more or less I was forced to take up engineering to keep up the tradition of our family. As a student eventhough I did not take much interest in journalism in India, when I went to the United States, as a student, I had the opportunity of editing the "International Students Journal" at Boston. I was the editor and promoter of the journal. I heard that that journal had reached a circulation of 5000 copies. There are a number of foreign students in the United States especially places like Boston, where different people from different countries have come and joined the universities. They go there because they do not have the facilities of foreign education in their own countries. They can understand about other countries — how they teach and what they teach. Most of them work as professional engineers to find out how the Americans are advanced in industrialisation and to generally develop their own countries to that level. They are graduated students going to get information.

When I met Mr Borron day before yesterday, he asked me "well, what is the object of your new journal". Rather he was the first man to remark this. I told him that I am not out to make money or out to make fame. During the best part of my youth I was outside India. I went as a very young boy and came back as grown up man. When I arrived back at Bombay, I was surprised to see the awful poverty that India is experiencing. I was living in America practically in such a way, that I had entirely forgotten during that time. So, my thought was, "How could, as an individual, I do something to this country?" I did not join the Government services, or in the political field to elevate our country. Still, I can do something individually to our country.

If an Indian is brought to New York, and if he is placed in the Times Square, when he gets back, he will not tolerate the conditions here. We have to transform the abject poverty into a decent society equal to those of other countries. What we want is adequate information and encouragement to our men.

Ever since I came back I had the idea. But machinery was not forthcoming. Fortunately, I was able to locate a broken down machinery in Madras. Finally, I approached the man and got the broken down machinery at a low price, and sat down at it for nearly two months and made it in good order. We have to show our people how other countries are getting on in life. How the people are living in other parts of the world? I do not mean to give information to our people about the latest lip-sticks

or high-healed shoes or to adopt other Western customs and manners which are meant for their convenience. Our climate is different, and we have got our age-long traditions and customs and we should not change our customs or dress sheepishly. What we want is to eliminate our abject poverty and raise India's status in the eyes of the world.

Thank you.

Mr J. A. BORRON:

Mr Naidu, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to say that Mr Naidu is trying to invoke me with his address. I am afraid, I have to introduce to you myself and I must tell you that I am a life member of the Domiciled European Association. I am extremely thankful to our host for having arranged a function like this and to give me an opportunity to meet the people for Coimbatore. I do not want you to think that I am quite new to this place. Far from it, I have known Coimbatore for a number of years and I should say frankly so.

First of all, however, I would like also to tell you a little secret. Yesterday, Mr Naidu and I were talking together. He said, "tomorrow we shall have a flattery of each other". Well, gentlemen, if sincerity is flattery I have to say nothing. In fact, I can safely say that Coimbatore is practically of Mr Naidu (Hear, hear). I came here as a stranger to Mr Naidu who had invited me to attend the party. I hope, in the years to come, I shall know you better

and better. When you look around you and see all these machinery, you can consider what Mr Naidu is doing and done for the youths of South India. Wherever I go, I hear about industrialisation. And friends, what is the good of industrialisation, without young men who are well-trained to look after machinery that you are going to put in your industry. Men, who are not only trained to run them, but to maintain and improve them, and if necessary to invent for themselves similar or better machinery. I think, you must all agree with me when I say that I went to the Arthur Hope Technology College to-day and saw that our host has done great service to South India.

I wish to suggest Mr Naidu one thing. Perhaps, some of the friends will be a bit too shy to suggest it. He had set a magnificent example in trying an experiment in agriculture. I should therefore like to request him that he will continue to do this experiment, because any man, who can produce two grains of corn in place where there was only one, is a benefactor. I think, you will all join with me in asking him to produce and improve the agriculture in South India (Hear, hear). I say this because food is very important throughout the world. When the question of food is satisfactorily met with, then we can decide the other things very easily.

Now, a great many of you have seen the invitation of our host, and you may be wondering what the hell on earth this J. A. Borron is, what the hell on earth the Economic Information Officer

of the British Information Services is? It is not a very easy thing for anyone to talk about oneself. But I can tell you that I came to South India in the year 1927. Since then, I have had connections with different friends. I joined the war in the British Army, and was sent back to South India again. During war, I have had the pleasure of serving the 14th Army and I can assure you from my personal experience that the men of the 14th Army which is comprised of South Indians did satisfactorily well under most difficult conditions. I shall give you one small example. I was the first officer attached to the American forces. The American forces comprise of negroes who are well prepared for all troubles. At that time, the South Indian soldiers were very alert and able in loading and unloading aeroplanes in order to give medical aid to China. Your men of the 14th Army did real credit to your country.

When I returned to Great Britain after the war, I was told to return to India as the British Information Officer. Our Head Office is in Delhi with branches at Bombay, Calcutta and Madras.

Now, what is the object of the British Information Office? Is it political? I will flatly say, "No". The British Information Office is here to give you or anyone, who can ask, full information about every aspect of life in Great Britain, cultural, economical or trade. It is not here to tell you how to run your press or to do this or that. It tells you how we do. What is the idea of giving information like this? Of course, I tell you the information is

free. Ladies and gentlemen, you will agree with me that the more we all know each other and our countries better, we are able to understand the mentality and minds of others and the less likely there is a chance of fight or trouble.

I used to write to my son in Great Britain about the life and conditions in South India, because it is my sincere idea that young children should know and learn about other countries.

In our host's address, he stated that the people are wanted to know this and that. I should like to inform you that this is only a new service started only last March, and I am trying to do all that is possible quickly. We are having a small reference library and we give an idea of the life in England, rather Great Britain. If any of the general public require any information concerning Great Britain, I shall be glad to give that information. My friends here were talking about students. I regret to state, I cannot say very much about it. The other day, I was talking to your High Commissioner in London Mr V. K. K. Menon and he agreed with me. You have got to rely on other universities also for technical studies. During the war young men left their universities and joined the army. When they return from war, we are bound to give them seats.

Wherever I go, I have been asked these questions. First, "what is the real condition in England?" Great Britain, ladies and gentlemen, has been affected very much by the war. I do not

want to minimise the facts. Just recently, we had an economic survey for 1948. We have stated the actual facts as they are. Gentlemen, it is better to have the milk. As you have got household expenses, you have got to verify that correctly. It gives truth and reserves nothing. The report says that the cooperation of the people is much needed. It hides nothing and it gives away nothing. The second question is, "is England sending goods to India and whether she is doing all she can". You must consider that before she commits herself, she must get new machinery for herself. India was its best customer. In textile machinery, England found India as its best customer. Does England want India to be industrialised? I think it is a very stupid question. Otherwise you would not be receiving this capital machinery from England. As India becomes industrialised, your standard of living will rise. My talks are always brief. I was taught in a hard school -- "Stand up, speak out and shut up".

Journalism, in the light of the West, is a paying proposition, because it gives enormous news. Journalists have a great part to play.

Finally, as a friend of South India, I wish to say how I wish to visit Coimbatore again. I wish there should be great changes to make it a leading industrial centre and with the help of the Pykara Scheme in the years to come, it will become a great textile centre. Let people not only call it as Naidu's town, but also as one of the premier towns of South India.

Mr Naidu, I thank you very much for inviting me to this function and I thank you all for hearing me patiently.

Proposing a vote of thanks, **RAO BAHADUR C. M. RAMACHANDRAN CHETTIAR** said :

"On behalf of the citizens of Coimbatore and on behalf of the journalists of this place I have much pleasure in proposing a hearty vote of thanks to Mr Borron who has been kind enough to respond to the invitation of Mr Naidu. You have been hearing to a very interesting speech by him. He has been giving us a good deal of information as regards journalism and the conditions in England compared with those of India. To-day in the speech of Mr Naidu you have been hearing how he was asked to enter the field of journalism. I was wondering whether he was only interested in agriculture or in industry or in commerce of this place. I hear also that Mr Ramakrishnan has forestalled him in this. It is rather pleasing to hear that a new daily has been started. We have one or two monthlies and one or two weeklies and now we have a daily. Salem, Madura and Trichy have a daily, why not Coimbatore. Now we are having an opportunity and our thanks are due to Mr Ramakrishnan. Mr Naidu has been kind enough to invite us and our thanks are due to him and on behalf of the journalists I thank you once more.